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ABSTRACT

Although general agreement exists about the importance of inservice teacher education, there is general dissatisfaction with its typical large-group implementation. A more successful strategy is to devise inservice programs that are based on the individual objectives of individual teachers. In such programs principals plan cooperatively with each teacher for inservice programs, a variety of options are determined by individual teachers, and evaluation of inservice experiences is based on the degree to which the activity actually assists the teacher to accomplish objectives. Schools using an objectives-based approach to teacher evaluation can develop inservice programs that support reaching the objectives on which the teachers are to be evaluated. Seven examples of individualized inservice programs are given. (Author/MLF)

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The Practitioner

A Newsletter for the On-Line Administrator

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Vol. IV, No. 1 October 1977

Individualizing Inservice Education

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEAL H, EDUCATION & WELFARE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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Setting: Local school faculty resource center

Subject: Inservice teacher education

Miscellaneous comments of teachers:

Well, wonder what they have decided we need this time!

We'll have another inservice consultant who will blow in, blow off, and blow out!

Just once I wish our staff development days could be used to meet some of my needs; there are so many areas where I need help.

Is there credit on the salary schedule for this inservice?

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NASSP

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How unfortunate that the preceding scenario is more typical than atypical—especially at a time when so many potent forces (declining enrollments, less teacher mobility, lower student test scores, new curriculum, and reduced fiscal resources) are converging on school districts.[1]. . .

Are many principals really satisfied with their schools' inservice programs for teachers? Few would claim them to be as effective as they might be. Occasionally an inservice speaker is informative—or even humorous—but the impact of inservice education upon classroom performance is difficult to see. The treatment usually doesn't take. Like the frontier villager who buys tonic from an itinerant trader, the euphoria lasts only until the pitchman gets out of town.

The irony of inservice education is that although general agreement exists about its importance there is general dissatisfaction with its implementation. Typically, the large-group approach is used. A committee determines the inservice activities for the year, contacts the necessary consultants, schedules workshops or meetings, and stands by as the "treatment" is applied to one and all alike.

EA 009 909

1. James L. Olivero, "Helping Teachers Grow Professionally," *Educational Leadership*, December 1976, p. 194.

Defining the Purpose

The purpose of inservice characteristically has been to inform teachers ("what's happening with Title IX"), or to upgrade the collective skills of the faculty ("every teacher a teacher of reading"). But this one-shot, full-bore approach is precisely the problem. It is an inadequate substitute for a systematic program aimed at developing individual teacher performance.

A more successful strategy, now being used increasingly by schools, is to devise inservice programs that are based on the individual objectives of individual teachers. Certainly a few teachers may share collective goals, but most will want to particularize the inservice program in support of their own professional objectives for the year. Would not a teacher be enthusiastic about using inservice time to attain these objectives? Why shouldn't the two—inservice and teacher goals—be coordinated?

Too often in the past, inservice programs were evaluated according to the quality of the presentation and not according to the degree to which the activities helped the teacher with immediate needs. Consequently, teachers either "liked" or "disliked" a program regardless of its practical value to their own effectiveness with students.

Inservice became a ceremony to enjoy (or to endure), not an opportunity to improve. Administrators assumed that the faculty would attend, listen, understand, and implement; but this usually did not happen as any number of research studies will attest:

> A 1975 NEA study indicated that "Inadequacy of inservice is one of three categories of concern to surface in every single district." In pressing the NEA indictment of inservice education, Edelfelt and Lawrence describe inservice as "piecemeal, patchwork, haphazard, and ineffective."[2]

In addition, a 1976 report stated:

> Traditional inservice programs have consisted almost entirely of information-gathering activities; workshops, college courses, institutes, conventions. Programs that stress utilization of that information or practice of techniques with feedback have been distinctly in the minority."[3]

Individualizing the Plans

Schools using the individualized approach plan carefully. Teachers do not simply do their own thing. Rather, as the teachers' objectives for the year are determined, inservice activities are tied to those objectives. The activities arise from the teachers' individual plans for improvement for that year, not from a committee's pressured need to provide some kind of program for the collective faculty.

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2. Roy A. Edelfelt and Margo Johnson, ed., *Rethinking Inservice Education*, National Education Association, 1975, p. 16.
3. Alexander Nicholson and Bruce Joyce, *ISTE Report III*, Stanford Center for Research and Development in Teacher Education, 1976, p. 20.

Group meetings, of course, have value. They may encourage a feeling of unity among the faculty or provide a break from the daily routines of teaching. They should not be viewed, however, as a way to improve teacher performance. Improving teacher performance, after all, is the purpose of inservice education.

The Joliet (Ill.) Township High Schools developed an individualized inservice program as a result of their being dissatisfied with the large-group format. Teachers, individually or in small groups, are required to submit inservice plans which include the following:

- ✓ Statement of objectives to be achieved
- ✓ Description of time, activities, and resources required to achieve objectives
- ✓ Procedures for evaluation.

Teachers have responded with a wide variety of activities. One chose to recruit community resources for consumer education, another organized a science career information packet, while still another developed transparencies for shorthand instruction. Evaluation plans by the teacher of shorthand included:

- Principal's observation of the use of new transparencies
- Survey of student opinion as to the value of the transparencies for understanding shorthand.

Some plans came from groups of teachers. The special education staff visited the Urbana Reading Laboratory while the homemaking teachers wrote individual learning capsules for their classes.

The individualized approach can be adapted to meet state requirements for inservice. When the New Hampshire State Board of Education mandated that every full-time educator complete a minimum of 50 clock hours of approved activity within a three-year period, the Concord Union School District developed an individualized program entitled "A Good Thing Growing." Teachers were allowed to create their own inservice plans within two general guidelines:

Areas of Activity:	subject fields teaching methods knowledge of local community resources innovative approaches leadership skills
Types of Activity:	workshops college courses visitations staff exchanges research or individual study group research or study

Other districts may choose to complement teacher needs with programs considered important to the entire school. For instance, the Urbana (Ill.) inservice program consists of:

- ✓ five half days reserved exclusively for individualized inservice
- ✓ four institute days planned by staff and principal "for building needs"
- ✓ teacher released time
- ✓ extension courses
- ✓ faculty meetings.

All activities are planned in writing, approved by the principal, and related to individual objectives or to school goals.

Three Variations to Consider

Individualized inservice programs provide options not available under the old lockstep "teacher institute" approach. For instance, the Worcester (Mass.) schools in collaboration with the University of Massachusetts have established mini-sabbaticals for teachers. During the school year, teachers are released individually or in small groups for week-long periods of inservice. This long-range, cooperative self-development program provides teachers the opportunity to help design a personalized inservice program for implementation at the most beneficial time.

Another inservice approach focuses upon learning in a specific subject field. The language arts teachers in Madison (Wis.) have developed under Title III a flexible inservice program which emphasizes motivation, instruction, reinforcement, and implementation. It includes four phases:

- Motivation of teachers through
  - — self-assessment and
  - — personal goal setting.
- Inservice instruction based upon the teachers' self-selection of objectives and routes to these objectives.
- Reinforcement of new competencies through micro-teaching or other monitoring-feedback systems. Teachers maintain their own record of progress toward desired objectives.
- Implementation by applying the newly-acquired skills to the classroom setting and determining the student behaviors to be measured as evidence of the successful application of new skills.

This approach to inservice is especially useful as a curriculum implementation model. It provides a good linkage from inservice planning through to student performance.

Schools with small enrollments may join together for stronger inservice programs. Three districts in South Dakota—Huron, Brookings, and Lake Central—have formed a Staff Development Cooperative to assist staff members with:

- ☐ Assessing inservice needs
- ☐ Designing, implementing, and evaluating inservice programs
- ☐ Identifying the impact of individualized inservice on the classroom.

The basic philosophy of this cooperative is that voluntary inservice activities planned by the participants are more attractive than are activities planned by others.

Identifying the Common Elements

What are the common threads running through individualized inservice programs? Their effectiveness is based upon a classical principle of education: They help persons to meet their individual needs. That is, inservice activities apply directly to teaching responsibilities. Beyond this fundamental point, successful emergent inservice programs include these elements:

- The inservice objectives arise from an assessment of the needs of individual teachers.
- Principals plan cooperatively with each teacher for inservice programs consisting of individual activities. Procedurally, this varies from plans being submitted by individual teachers for the principal's approval to joint plans developed by teachers and principals.
- Program implementation consists of a variety of options determined by individual teachers. Teachers have a choice of content and process for meeting their inservice needs in most programs. Thus, the particular learning styles of teachers are recognized.
- Time is allowed for teachers to meet the objectives established from the needs assessment. Projects may extend over various periods of time.
- Motivation is intrinsic as well as extrinsic. The intrinsic incentive for participants arises from the opportunity to pursue a program the teacher has planned to achieve objectives considered important.
- Evaluation of inservice experiences is based upon the degree to which the activity actually assists the teacher to accomplish objectives.

Linking Inservice to Evaluation

Inservice education and staff evaluation can be wedded under an individualized inservice program. Schools using an objectives-based (job target) approach to evaluation can develop inservice programs that support reaching the objectives upon which the teachers are to be evaluated. The synchronization of professional growth with professional appraisal makes good sense—legally and pedagogically. Increasingly administrators who want to dismiss teachers successfully must document the assistance given to teachers to correct their deficiencies. What better proof of the administration's good faith and effort than to make this assistance an integral part of the inservice process?

Inservice education and staff evaluation need not be mutually exclusive. Consider these common objectives for evaluation and for inservice:

— to ensure progress toward achieving goals

— to improve the professional performance of staff

— to improve the effectiveness of school programs

— to identify and meet professional and personal needs

— to recognize the contributions of staff.

The Montgomery County (Md.) public schools have designed a direct linkage between their staff inservice and staff evaluation programs. Entitled the "Teacher Competency Program," the process involves a cooperative effort among teacher and supervisory personnel. The Montgomery County evaluation system requires principals to specify areas for teacher improvement and to suggest ways of gaining this improvement. During the planning conferences a program of specific activities or courses is designed mutually by the teacher and principal based upon the improvement desired.

The district has developed performance criteria as guidelines for principals and teachers. For example, if a principal and teacher mutally agree that the teacher should "plan and provide for the involvement of students in the learning process" (Performance Criterion 3), the courses offered by Montgomery County which contribute to achieving the criterion are:

- Teaching Strategies
- Individualizing Instruction
- Motivation and Management of Learning
- Preparing Student Objectives and Assessment Measures.

Courses focus on skills and methods which teachers use in the classroom. They include an introduction to the theoretical base, illustrations of skills using various media, and participant practice. Principals assume a major responsibility for improving the performance of staff and for assisting teachers in developing their skills. Recommendations for future training complete the evaluation cycle each year.

Performance criteria are also central to the Lincoln (Nebr.) Public Schools' Junior High Staff Development Program. Twenty-one competencies have been identified from the district goals as desired areas

of growth for junior high staff. The teacher, principal, and team leader, if requested, assist in identifying the person each teacher will work with on an inservice activity. Emphasis is placed on a continuous, balanced staff growth through self-designed and self-directed programs within the competency areas.

An external evaluation report of the Lincoln Junior High Staff Development Program described the outcomes of this approach:

- 80 percent of the teachers engaged in the project indicated personal satisfaction (theoretical maximum)
- 45 percent of the projects were self-initiated and self-designed
- 80 percent of the projects were conducted on a voluntary team basis
- 70 percent of the teachers participated voluntarily.

The report concluded that "teacher participation in activities which were self-designed or self-selected on the one hand, and related to building and district goals and purposes on the other hand, is indicative of acceptance of the Project on a personal and professional level."

Teacher Centers

The development of teacher centers provides another option for individualizing inservice education. A primary goal of the Minneapolis Schools/University of Minnesota Teacher Center is to explore how teacher training, both preservice and inservice, can be more responsive to the unique needs of teachers in the distinctively different school programs evolving in Minneapolis. The "lounge-like setting" of the Center allows a variety of activities to occur ranging from guest speakers to open forums on current issues to the development of new courses for teaching. In addition, multiple opportunities for the university to engage in research and development in teacher training are facilitated by the Center program.

Teacher centers come in many varieties, however. They range from independent programs with the freedom and flexibility to deal with individual teacher needs to consortia with responsibilities for the traditional, inservice education day. A teacher center's relationship to individualized inservice education depends upon its operational philosophy.

Finale

In summary, it must be emphasized that individualizing inservice education does not imply that a teacher necessarily works alone or in any one particular mode. After an initial diagnostic or needs assessment step, a teacher's individualized inservice program may include all manner of activities: lectures, workshops, college courses, group discussions, and group projects, as well as independent study or individual projects. The essential notion is that individual professional needs are met through instructional approaches selected by individual teachers in cooperation with their supervisors.

To Illustrate

Joliet Township High Schools — 201 E. Jefferson St.
LeRoy E. Leslie, Principal — Joliet, Ill. 60432
Joliet West Campus

The Joliet schools halted their large-group, traditional in-service program because it was not responsive to the needs of individual staff members. The focus now is upon departmental and individual needs, giving teachers a greater variety of activities and choices as well as a more direct influence on programs.

According to LeRoy Leslie, "Joliet's plan now practices what we constantly encourage teachers to do in their classrooms: be sensitive to student needs, tap student interests, vary teaching methodologies, and individualize." Entitled the Staff Development Program, it incorporates these features:

1. Recognizes as legitimate and important the needs of individual staff members in addition to those of department, buildings, and the district.
2. Responds to all four levels of need—particularly individual—when and wherever they arise.
3. Puts into practice the important concepts known about the ways people learn.
4. Incorporates an assortment of formats and alternatives geared toward the solution of any question or issue.
5. Utilizes a problem- or issue-centered approach with emphasis on outcomes.
6. Utilizes the expertise that exists on staff and goes to the "outside" only when resources are not available in the district.
7. Structures experiences only in terms of adhering to the problem-solving process, placing the responsibility for the identification and/or follow-through for development on the department chairperson and principal, and ensures that all efforts are geared toward better achieving district goals and objectives.

Joliet has published a seven-page list of inservice activities approved and implemented during the 1976-77 school year. Individual and departmental activities supported the achievement of district goals.

Concord High School — 16 Rumford St.
Charles F. Foley, Principal — Concord, N.H. 03301

"A Good Thing Growing," the staff development program of the Concord Union School District, was initiated in response to a state mandate requiring the development of local three-year master plans which reflect "specific needs identified through self-study and analysis by the professional staff, students, and parents." The current plan was first tested in 1974 by staff volunteers.

The Concord program depends upon cooperative planning between a staff member and his supervisor. Its aim is professional development attuned to individual needs. The teacher-supervisor team determines the inservice hours allowed for any one development activity. Should disagreement occur, either person may present the problem to the Continuing Education Committee for resolution. A "Staff Development Activity Sheet" is filled out for each inservice activity and forwarded to the staff development secretary in the central office. The staff member identifies on the activity sheet the general area of work and the specific activity to be completed. The district allows work in five general areas (content, methodology, leadership, etc.) with six activities approved per area.

Brookens Junior High School — 1776 E. Race St.
George Melton, Principal — Urbana, Ill. 71801

The Urbana inservice program emphasizes the theme, "professional or personal growth for each individual staff member." Staff members submit a preliminary plan by June 1 of each year. These are returned by late August with a final, approved plan set by late September. These plans are reviewed by a team of teachers and administrators who (1) bring together teachers with similar interests and (2) provide assistance as needed.

As indicated earlier, the Urbana inservice program includes five half-days for individual teachers, four institute days planned jointly by a principal and staff, released time for professional growth, approved extension courses, and faculty meetings. Individual plans are submitted in writing to the building principal. The four institute days include preschool preparation and a records day in January. Urbana has developed planning forms for use by teachers and principals. For certain inservice activities, released time is provided through the use of substitute teachers. A modest budget is available for consultant services.

Jefferson County School District R-1 — 1209 Quail St.
Jim Metzdorf, Coordinator — Lakewood, Colo. 80215
Staff Development Academy

The Jefferson County Staff Development Academy is committed to professional growth programs tailored to the needs of Jefferson County personnel. Each year a survey of staff needs indicates which inservice courses will be offered by the Academy.

Program opportunities are categorized into five areas:

— Classroom instruction

— Curriculum and teacher preparation

— Child psychology, growth, and development

— Evaluating pupil progress

— Self-assessment for educators.

Employees must file a professional growth plan with the district. After approval of courses, programs, or activities by the employee's supervisor or principal, credit may be earned through college coursework or inservice programs planned, developed, and implemented by the Staff Development Academy. Advancement on the salary schedule is given for successful completion of approved professional growth activities.

To provide for individual needs, teachers not only enroll in inservice courses but also can do curriculum projects or personal experience projects. At the conclusion of any of the experiences each teacher is required to complete a participant's evaluation. Jefferson County publishes a 51-page handbook which describes in detail professional growth programs available through the Staff Development Academy.

Madison Public Schools
Tom Swensen, Inservice Coordinator

545 Dayton St.
Madison, Wis. 53703

The Madison inservice program, an individualized approach, is developed from three criteria:

1. The program must be sufficiently flexible to allow a teacher to begin at his own level and progress at his own rate.
2. Inservice should take place during a teacher's paid time.
3. Program effectiveness is determined by the growth in teacher competency from beginning to end of the training period. Whenever possible, assessment of teacher growth should be based upon measured student achievement.

The four-phase program, involving motivation, instruction, reinforcement, and implementation, is described in a pamphlet, entitled *An Individualized Teacher Inservice Model*. The district has developed techniques to assist teachers with each phase. For instance, 18 different self-assessment activities are identified to assist teachers with "phase one" motivation. "Phase two" instruction revolves around 21 "fundamental concepts identified as those controlling ideas at work in the process of communication." The program focus is experience based: emphasis is placed upon opportunities "to actually practice the behavior to be learned."

Lincoln Public Schools
Betty Dillon, Director
Staff Development

720 South 22d St.
Lincoln, Nebr. 68510

The Lincoln schools operate a Teacher Corps Project which seeks to provide a comprehensive competency-based preservice/inservice program for experienced teachers and aides. Teachers and administrators together plan the staff development program each year. A teacher is assigned half-time in each school as the "building staff development leader." A yearly needs assessment is made each spring for the following school year.

The staff development process is built upon eight "basic principles," to include:

- ✓ Collaborative (administrator-teacher) decision making.
- ✓ Needs assessment, to determine the activities to be planned.
- ✓ Optional activities; a variety of activities is available for inservice so that participation in any one activity is by individual choice.
- ✓ Desired outcomes stated as teacher competencies. Inservice activities specify desired outcomes and the assessment indicators acceptable for each outcome. Job targets are stated as specific competencies to be demonstrated.
- ✓ Multiple delivery system: options for the staff include variations in time, materials, leadership, and process so as to match the particular needs and learning styles of the participants.
- ✓ On-site application, with staff development activities at the school providing ample opportunity for immediate use of acquired competencies.
- ✓ Formative and summative evaluation. Each staff development activity provides a strong feedback loop, assesses the process as well as the product, and reports outcomes as well as recommendations for program revision and further activities based upon new needs.
- ✓ Leadership, for each staff development activity, based upon the particular circumstances of the activity. Leadership may come from any number of school, community, or university sources.

Seven basic delivery systems operate in support of the Lincoln program, to include:

- — graduate courses at school site
- — modules or mini-courses
- — curriculum improvement projects
- — school-university teams
- — teacher center assistance using a diagnostic-prescriptive model
- — workshops, symposia, and retreats
- — staff development meetings.

The Lincoln District publishes a series of eight IMPACT booklets which describe inservice efforts at the junior high school level. In addition, a teacher appraisal booklet is published which explains the relationship between professional growth activites and the Lincoln "job target" teacher appraisal plan.

Montgomery County Public Schools
Marilyn Nelson, Associate Director
Staff Development

850 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, Md. 20850

The Montgomery County inservice program requires an individual plan of improvement for each teacher. The plan is based upon objectives mutually developed by the teacher and a principal or other supervisor and designed to meet specific instructional needs. The expectation is that teachers will increase their knowledge and teaching skills at a practical level.

To assist teachers with their objectives, the County offers a large number of courses to improve teacher competency. Each course includes an introduction to the theoretical base, illustrations of skills through various media, and participant practice. The course schedule, entitled the Teacher Competency Series, includes such offerings as Diagnostic and Prescriptive Techniques for Regular Classrooms, Teaching Strategies, Motivation and Management, and Parent-Teacher Conference Skills.

Teacher evaluation is part of the total package. The evaluation plan requires that areas for improvement be specified and that ways to achieve that improvement be prescribed. The major objective of the joint inservice and evaluation program is to "make classroom teachers more effective as classroom teachers."

The Montgomery County program provides a strong linkage between advanced certification requirements and the needs of teachers, of students, and of the school system.

This *Practitioner* was developed by Richard Stephens, principal of Lyons High School in Lyons, Nebraska, and Scott Thomson, deputy executive director of NASSP.

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